

Handy—The Native Culture in the Marquesas

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reason: the *pu hokahau* had on it a scale of four notes and the limit of the range of the *ru'u* and *rari*, as has been said, was four whole tones. It seems probable that anciently these songs were accompanied by the flute. The spacing of the holes of the flute which were measured off by two-finger widths may have had a determining influence on the scale originally used in the *ru'u*. [534]

On Ua Huka the same system of signaling was used by the women in the *hu'u* as that used by the men in the *tapriata* dance. (See Modern Dancing.) In other words the motions here were partly codical and partly pantomimic. One *rari* which I have has a repeated refrain called *moumu*. [202]

THE TAPE'A CHANT

The *tape'a* was sung with the *rari*. Like it, it was sung by men and women together, and its subject matter, form, time, and melody were the same. After three or four *rari* were sung, the performers would stop, rest, smoke, and chat, and then finish with the *tape'a*. In other words the *tape'a* followed and completed the singing of the *rari*, just as the *pehi* followed the *putu*. In the *tape'a* the women sang alone, while on some occasions the men did what was called *ha'a koakoa* (to enliven), making choral accompaniment, on other occasions uttering forceful ejaculations and accompanying them with pantomimic motions. While the *rari* and *ru'u* are quiet and meditative, the *tape'a*, due to this part enacted by the men, is very rousing. The purpose, as evidenced by the meaning of the ejaculations and pantomime, and as explained by informants, is erotic excitation. [521]

THE PIPELINE CHANT

The *pipeline* was a song composed in honor of a girl, corresponding to the *putu* for the boy. Youths (*ka'ioi*) built a special house (*oho-au*) near the dwelling of the girl's family. A *tuhuna* composed the *pipeline* in this house, and there taught it to a choir of young girls (*vehine ka'ioi*). When the song had been well rehearsed it was sung before the house of the girl in whose honor it had been composed, and there was a feast in her honor. The words of the example obtained describe the girl's preparing herself for the fête. A woman leader (*kahua*) sang the first line before the others joined in, as was the *putu* chant for the boy. The melody is slow and graceful, essentially feminine. It has a range of only three notes. The singers, who were seated in lines on the grounds or on the house platform, accompanied their singing with clapping with the palms flat (*papaki*) and with hollow palms (*pu*). There was no drum accompaniment. The bodies of the singers were swung from side to side accompanying the rhythm of the song. [533]

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personality, did not seem to coincide in certain areas with many of the more obvious native customs. Furthermore, a number of practices described for the Marquesas not only seemed to be completely absent there but also contrary to data from elsewhere in Polynesia. Preliminary investigation into the sexual behavior of the natives immediately brought forth evidence of a situation which was somewhat more complex than originally apparent, being particularly interesting as a case in the dynamics of Marquesan culture contact, as will be demonstrated in this paper. 121

Investigation Techniques

In the investigation of sexual behavior in the Marquesas, fluency in the language was of utmost importance. Actually, I believe that it is extremely difficult to conduct any type of valid anthropological investigation in Eastern Polynesia without attaining linguistic proficiency. The Marquesans use their native tongue as a weapon against outsiders, who they consider will never bother to learn it. A large amount of joking and trickery is indulged in before the face of the investigator who must work through an interpreter. In such a situation, it is relatively easy for the native to impart erroneous information without too much fear of being apprehended in his falsehood. 122

The native language has become an efficient tool with which the Marquesan may satisfy his intense resentment against the privileged white intruders, and their inquisitive prying, by astutely misleading them, until, hopelessly confused, they become a source of fun and butt of derision for the whole population. 123 191 [609] [522]

However, knowledge of the language on the part of the investigator makes such deviousness impossible, contributing materially to the collection of information on any topic from weather prognoses to historical traditions. 122

Direct interrogation of informants on the physical aspects of sexual behavior proved to have a relatively limited utility. Despite the fact that sexual topics comprise a large part of the [521]• 124

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daily conversation of Marquesans of post-pubertal age, the appearance of a note book and pencil brings about a rapid change of the subject of conversation at best, if not a stony silence. Even the most shameless young buck will cease his bragging in this situation. There is an intense distrust of individuals who would seek to record such information, which is intensified if the intended informant believes that he will be identified by name in the notes as the source of a block of data. Close friendship with the investigator seems to be of relatively little avail in altering these attitudes on the part of the informants. 124
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/4/ My wife collected a number of female reproductive histories from women, many of whom she had treated or advised on personal problems, but was forced to abandon attempts to obtain information of frequency of intercourse in marriage, although data on menstruation and childbirth was readily obtained.

On the other hand, direct interrogation was quite possible in certain areas bordering on sexual behavior, especially on such matters as native medical preparations, childbirth practices and postpartum care. Curiosity in these matters was tolerated and even encouraged at times.

Direct interrogation, therefore, was abandoned as a means of obtaining information of an intimate nature, but was utilized in the gathering of collateral data on subjects more or less related to the main object of investigation.

Observation of random situations provided much data on such aspects as courting, autoeroticism, etc., but the more intimate details of sexual behavior could naturally not be observed first hand.

The method whereby much of the data were obtained was made possible by the circumstances of the archeological excavations which we were carrying out. Employing large gangs of workmen, it was often necessary to spend long periods supervising the clearing of archeological sites or restoration of the areas excavated. During the work, a steady conversation persisted among the workmen, usually revolving around sexual topics. /5/ In such a situation it was relatively easy to jot down notes on such information as was overheard in notes, as 123
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the workmen were not at all suspicious of the note pad in this context, for all writing was ostensibly for the recording of archeological data. There was a generally relaxed and easy atmosphere among the men; and much less boasting of sexual prowess was noted at such times, for the group usually handled extravagant claims in a rather unkind fashion. Naturally, the presence of certain individuals precluded discussion of their respective female relatives for all practical purposes, but the shifting composition of the work crew made it possible to fill in gaps in the data resulting from such propriety.

The information obtained by these methods was cross-checked whenever possible by use of additional informants, replication of the interview or, in the cases where the source of data was overhead in conversations, simply by leading the conversation back toward the same topic. My wife, working almost exclusively with women, obtained information that complimented the data I had obtained with their husbands, thus providing additional cross-checks on informant reliability.

In summary, the attitudes of the native culture and the fact that my main interest was in an area completely divorced from sexual behavior necessitated a reliance upon observation and monitoring of conversation for most of the data presented here on the more intimate aspects of sexual behavior. Direct questioning was possible only on topics such as /6/ as childbirth techniques, menstruation, concepts of procreation, ethno-medicine related to sexual activity and behavior of younger children.

Population

The most recent census data on the Marquesan population is given on p. 63. As these data were collected in 1956, allowance must be made for some slight growth during the 4 years which have elapsed since then.

The breakdown of the population in the table is derived from official records in the archives of the Circonscription des Iles Maruises at Taiohae, Nuku Hiva. Despite the apparent

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The sequence of vaginal astringents is terminated at puberty, but a new type of medication is begun in some cases, to alter the color of the mucus membranes and the labiae. It is believed to be shameful for the labiae or mucus lining of the vulva to be excessively ruddy in color, hence a preparation of chopped young coconut meat is applied over the vulva to alter the color of the parts in question. A supposed secondary effect of this medication is to render the pubic hair (hu'u hu'u) more pliable and soft, as coarse pubic hair is considered to be somewhat unbecoming. 826
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/33/ Girls at puberty continue to receive sexual instructions from their grandmothers or members of the grandmother's generation, but much is also learned from more sexually advanced friends. At this age, Marquesan girls are often seen together, talking secretly for long periods of time. The talks almost invariably involve sexual matters. For this reason, government school teachers state that it is wiser to release girls from school at this point, as their interests often attract and produce "adverse" effects on younger girls in the lower grades of school. 864
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At puberty, female homosexuality occurs. One context in which some homosexual play takes place is during instruction of relatively sexually inexperienced girls by others who are more experienced. In such instruction, both girls remove their clothing and assume a position of copulation. The instructor supposedly demonstrates the positions of intercourse and the pelvic movements, acting first as the "girl" and then the "boy" of the couple. 864
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Although very much at ease with each other in states of undress, girls at puberty become very self-conscious about appearing in mixed company in any type of attire that might be termed daring. In intercourse they seldom remove all of their clothing, usually merely pulling up their skirt, even if there is no probability of being surprised en flagrante. Swimming is indulged in fully dressed, if there is any possibility of being observed, while bathing nude in secluded pools is quite common and semi-nudity around the house is the rule. 291
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to the point of orgasm. Oral stimulation is used in a prelude to the sex act and also as an interruption during the course of the act. It is from the promiscuous girls that the young males with experimental orientations obtain their introduction to fellatio. In nearly all cases, men named well-known promiscuous girls as the source of their first experience with this particular sexual outlet. 833 836

Cunnilinctus is permitted by most of the promiscuous girls during the sex act. It apparently evokes a mild sensation in comparison to actual penis intercourse, but is nonetheless valued. [832]

A wider variety of intercourse positions are used in intercourse with promiscuous girls. These will be discussed at greater length below, when adult sexual behavior is considered.

Despite the opening of a wide vista of heterosexual contacts after puberty, masturbation among males apparently increases markedly in frequency during the first few years of adolescence. Males state that at this time they are constantly in a state of excitation as a result of thinking of their girls and their plans for the evening. Masturbation is resorted to quite frequently during the daytime to satisfy this sexual urge, which is considered to be so strong. Males will leave work on the pretext of urination, masturbate rapidly, and return to their jobs. Masturbation is not considered to have any deleterious physical effects; in fact, it seems to be regarded as a kind of beneficial exercise. 839

/50/ The constant sexual excitation of young males has already been alluded to, in our discussion of courtship. A state of semi-erection is often maintained for long periods during working hours. Sexual conversation may evoke strong images of recent experiences with erection occurring quite rapidly. As soon as turgidity is noticeable it is usually called to the attention of others present, in boisterous tones. The individual experiencing the erection usually laughs and makes some comment, often exclaiming: 'Ua pia! 'Ua to'a! -- "It's a root! It's a stud!", or 'Ua tute hakaiki -- [521] • 831

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Although the male:female ratio of the total population does not indicate any scarcity of females, the distribution of females over the inhabited areas is by no means even. Therefore, although a large surplus exists in one valley, a scarcity of near-absence of females may occur in an adjacent valley. Although such inequalities place strains on the day-to-day sex life of the unattached male, they do not ultimately effect his chances for marriage, however; for anyone seriously looking for a wife can move into a well-populated valley at will or make regular weekend visits. [484] 162

Bestiality occurs, as a substitute for normal sexual relations. It is not frequent to all appearances, although the reticence of the Marquesan on matters believed to be abhorred by whites, may account for the paucity of evidence concerning this practice. [124] 839

/59/ One report was obtained of a girl who had repeatedly used a dog as a cunnilinctor. The girl was living in an isolated area at the time the practice began, where no male sexual partners were available. Having had some sexual experience prior to this isolation, the girl experienced deprivation, as a result of which she began this practice. My informant definitely regarded this as an unusual practice, stating that he had not heard of it previously.

References to male bestial practices were made in oblique fashion on a variety of occasions. Many of these appeared in the context of general conversation about hunting expeditions or explorations of one variety or another, where men were isolated for long periods of time. In such conditions, feelings of sexual deprivation were generally said to result in a re-appraisal of the available non-human sources of sexual gratification: horses, dogs and other quadrupeds. The implication was that gratification was usually obtained by anal intercourse. [521]•

A very frequently overheard reference was that to copulation with chickens. It was stated, most commonly, that in intercourse the chicken would gyrate wildly, flapping its wings, producing a cooling breeze. This was called the "Nuku Hiva fan" by informants.

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No information could be obtained on frigidity; therefore, it is impossible to state whether it exists or not. 833

Extramarital relations are common, appearing quite soon after marriage and increasing in frequency as the couple approaches middle /68/ age. The male seeks sexual partners mainly among the wives of friends (many of whom may have been former lovers), promiscuous girls in the community, and the younger virginal girls with whom a married man often plays the role of sexual initiator. Relationships may also be with daughters-in-law (which is not considered incestuous) or with blood relatives. The contacts take place most frequently in the bush, either by plan or chance, and at drinking bouts. 837

Females seek sexual partners among married males, and the young boys of the community. Contacts take place most frequently during the day when husbands are away from the house working their copra lands or gardens, as well as at night when husbands are likely to be out fishing.

Contacts of this type revert often to premarital behavior patterns; intercourse is rapid and devoid of elaboration or variation. 833

Homosexuality involving married individuals is rare and practiced only under conditions of enforced abstinence. There is some indication that adult males prefer younger boys for this purpose, as the preference is frequently verbalized, the observation being made that young boys have softer bodies, more like those of girls. Such contacts are casual and fleeting, and do not lead to any permanent relationship between the parties involved. Permanent relationships are considered to be characteristic of the deviant mahu or male homosexual, and are regarded as unnatural. 838

/69/ Bestiality is indulged in by married individuals as an emergency practice in situations of abstinence. Chickens are commonly used by males for copulation, and dogs are used as cunnilinctors by females. 839

Extramarital exploits are most carefully concealed in most cases, but news generally leaks out, as it is seldom possible to conceal anything for long in communities of between 521 •

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two and three hundred people, such as one finds in most valleys. Furthermore, one or both partners will brag to confidants who will immediately spread the news.

Extramarital relations, if discovered, usually arouse extreme manifestations of sexual jealousy (to makou) in the injured party. Wives who are known or suspected to have had extramarital relations are generally beaten by their husbands. Often the beating is rather light, with slapping blows directed about the head and shoulders. More rarely, a closed fist is used. It is very rare that any objects are used to inflict injury. One individual was encountered who punished his wife's indiscretions by beating her with a stick or the flat of his machete, but he was regarded as being excessively cruel. It is regarded as unseemly for a woman to display much interest in any male who is a potential sexual partner, unless he is a very good friend of her husband and highly trusted or already in a permissive sexual relationship with the woman. Women who deviate from this rule of conduct by talking to strangers, especially of topics bordering on sex, or of displaying pleasure in the presence and conversation of another male are likely to be sharply /70/ reprimanded as well as beaten. Older women in a family observe the actions of young daughters-in-law in the household for such misconduct, and may act themselves or relay the information to the husband.

When confronted with actual or suspected infidelity of a mate, the male assumes a posture of righteous anger, but rarely uses physical violence on anyone but his wife. A man may make slighting remarks to one who has cuckolded him, but physical violence is quite rare.

Women who suspect husbands of being unfaithful respond by adapting a behavior pattern in which they display moods of depression and/or shrewish irritability. One informant said that his wife became tearful upon learning of an exploit of his, and spent a day or so sobbing intermittently, saying that he no longer loved her. She then became very aggressive and continually interpreted innocuous statements of his as referring to his paramour, continually ordering him to leave the house and go to the other woman. She then

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lapsed into another period of depression. Such behavior usually ⁸³⁷ results in infuriating the husband, and the wife may receive a beating, followed by forced sexual intercourse. This practice is regarded as being the best remedy for sexual jealousy, and usually speeds the re-establishment of normal relations for a time. [833]

Sex in Later Life

Reasonably frequent sexual relations are carried on by individuals in the sixties and seventies. Males of this age are often capable of normal copulation, with greatly reduced frequency. Fellatio and /71/ cunnilinctus are practiced. Elderly men often seek out younger women as sexual partners, as well as engaging in sexual relations with their mates. ⁸³³
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Elderly women often indulge in brief liaisons with much younger males who cannot find sexual partners in their own age group. A woman of 65 spent the night with a copra schooner sailor about 35 years of age and was not subjected to any censure whatsoever. Another elderly woman, who had been a well-known promiscuous girl in her youth, was frequently a sexual partner for younger males, on occasion soliciting their attentions.

Sex in Humour

Marquesans place great emphasis on one's ability to indulge in light, rapid-fire banter, using witticisms which span a range from subtle puns and esoteric allusions of a nature understood by only one or a few of the onlookers, to what in our society would be termed the more coarse kinds of humour. Much Marquesan humour is sexual or at least related to a sexual topic. ⁵²¹
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In mixed company, under normal circumstances, care is taken to refrain from using the tapu expressions which have been discussed previously, referring to the male and female genitalia or the sex act. In such cases, the more subtle expressions and figures of speech are used; and often the conversation can be completely misunderstood. New circumlocutions

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and esoteric terms for sexual matters are constantly being produced, mainly by the unmarried males, it would appear. These /72/ are employed with the anticipation that the uninitiated listeners will be completely deluded.

Some examples of esoteric sexual terms have already been given (see the list of synonyms for the verb "to copulate," p. 47). The development of a few others will be presented here. The Kendal Oil Co. commercial, given nightly over Radio Tahiti, provided the material for a new term. The word "Kendal" came to be used as a verb, "to ejaculate," and nominalized to mean "semen."

In another case, the adolescents of Hatiheu were swimming off the dock in that bay. The boys discovered that several of the girls, swimming in skirts, wore no undergarments, and proceeded to dive below the girls who were treading water, and look up their dresses for a glimpse of their genitals. The girls quickly noticed the submarine observers and demanded to know what they were looking for. A boy quickly responded that they were searching for puta'a ta'a (*Murex ramosus*) shells. From then on, the Hatiheu esotericism for vulva was puta'a ta'a.

Among company of a single sex, the restraints on conversation are relaxed, with many expressions being used, except in the cases where individuals standing in certain respect relations to the speaker, such as a brother-in-law, or father, are present. In such situations, those sharing respect relationships will refrain from conversation of a baldly sexual nature.

"Obscenity" in the Marquesan tongue has changed considerably over the years, as a result of outside contact, both with other Polynesians /73/ and with Europeans. During the first three decades of this century, the aboriginal obscenities were still in use. These were most often directed at an individual's pride in status and personal cleanliness, rather than referring to sexual matters.

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